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Q&A with Karen Hughes | Improving America's image abroad

By Alex Fryer, *Seattle Times* staff reporter

Under Secretary of State Karen Hughes, longtime adviser to President Bush and leader of his effort to improve America's image abroad, met yesterday in Seattle with leaders of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other local groups dedicated to eliminating global poverty.

As part of her trip to Seattle, which coincided with National Corporate Philanthropy Day, Hughes spoke with *The Seattle Times* about Third World health programs, democracy in the Mideast, and why White House auditors determined that her office failed to demonstrate results and develop a broad strategy.

Q. What brings you to Seattle?

A. I thought it was a great place to come and talk about the growing partnership between government and the private sector in improving people's lives across the world.

Q. Did you come up with better ways to partner with private groups?

A. A lot of time, you have many different donors, and many foundations and governments, and they all have little baskets of money that have to be used in different ways. We talked about ways we could better coordinate and agree, perhaps, on goals — let's agree on common objectives and how each donor fits in the picture of achieving that objective.

Q. Could you explain what you do as under secretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs?

A. I'm in charge of America's conversation with the world. I have three strategic goals. The first is to offer a positive vision of hope to the world that is rooted in our values. Second, I'm working to isolate the violent

extremists and undermine their efforts to paint the war on terror as war against Islam, because it's not. And I'm working to foster a sense of common interest across the world.

Q. What are your thoughts on a recent White House report that said public-diplomacy programs could not demonstrate results, and there is no broad public-diplomacy strategy?

A. Edward R. Murrow said no cash register rings when a mind is changed. It's sometimes hard to measure the short-term effectiveness of a program. That's why I was hired, to put [a strategy] in place.

Q. What do you make of the violence over Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad?

A. In many ways, our country offers the world a model of how to deal with these things. There are certain racial and ethnic slurs we no longer use in this country, and it's not because any law says we can't. We're free to use them but we don't. With freedom comes responsibility.

Q. Does democracy sometimes produce results that America shouldn't be happy with?

A. America believes in elections, even when we strongly disagree with the views of those who are sometimes elected. The Palestinian people voted for change, but we feel the new government has a choice to make. To deliver a better quality of life to the people who elected it, it's got to renounce terror and recognize Israel's right to exist. You can't have a government that has one foot in terror and another foot in governing.

Q. Most people overseas get their impression of America from movies and music. How do you counter that when the media don't reflect our values?

A. That's the biggest part of my job. As an American parent, I don't want my children to see what's on some of our movies. We need to work hard to show a different face of America.